

A Few Examples of Native Montana Wildlife Climate Impacts

Wolverine: Deep snow pack means many things to a wolverine mother looking for a den to raise her kits. Warmth. Safety. Hidden. Wolverines construct tunnels up to 6 ft under snow assured to remain at least one meter thick until the spring thaw. Although the wolverine is usually a solitary animal, young kits sometimes stay with their mothers until they reach adulthood. However, denning mothers will abandon their snowy hideaways if rising temperatures melt them early, even if the kits aren't ready to leave.



American Pika: A high-pitched whistle from a rocky pile signals you are looking at a house belonging to the American pika. Nicknamed the "rock rabbit," the tiny pika is the size of tennis balls with babies the size of walnuts. With a heavy coat it never sheds, pikas are highly susceptible to overheating, and at temperatures over 75 degrees Fahrenheit they can die in less than an hour. Pikas live at high elevations, though lately rising temperatures have been chasing them upslope to cooler climes.

However, mountains have tops, and these resourceful rock rabbits may soon be left stranded at the summit without a way down.



Cold water fish—native trout

Long known for beautiful mountain streams and outstanding fisheries, the state of Montana now lists 19 species of native fish as "species of concern," including Bull trout, fluvial Arctic Grayling, Yellowstone and West Slope Cutthroat trout. Many of these species are dependent upon clear, cold water to survive. However, the N. Rockies have been experiencing reduced snowpack volume and increasingly earlier spring melting of the higher elevation snowpack. Combined with rising

summer temperatures, these factors lead to reduced summer streamflows and higher summer stream temperatures. This causes stress, and even death for native coldwater fish species in Montana, such as Bull trout. In recent years, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks has even been obliged to implement summer sport-fishing closures in response to these climate-induced habitat threats.

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U.S. Climate Action Partnership Calls for Dedicated Funding To Help Nature and People Adapt to the Threats of Climate Change

The US Climate Action Partnership (USCAP), a coalition of leading business and environmental groups, has come together to call on the federal government to quickly enact strong national legislation to require significant reductions of greenhouse gas emissions. USCAP recently issued a landmark set of principles and recommendations, *A Blueprint for Legislative Action*, to underscore the urgent need for a policy framework on climate change.

Among the many principles outlined in the *Blueprint*, USCAP has called for dedicated funding to enhance the resilience of fish and wildlife habitats, at the federal, state, tribal and local levels. The *Blueprint* also calls for a national climate adaptation strategy, based on the best available science, to empower natural resources managers at the national, state, local and tribal levels to identify, prioritize and protect ecosystems at risk from climate change.

Specifically the *Blueprint* states that, "There is a need to address both human and ecological needs for adaptation to unavoidable climate change by enhancing resilience and response to climate change impacts for affected communities (e.g., impacts on public health, water resources, and infrastructure) and fish and wildlife habitats, at the federal, state, tribal and local levels. We should also promote international engagement and cooperation in addressing both community and ecosystem-related climate change adaptation needs."¹

With regard to protecting our nation's natural resources, the *Blueprint* goes on to say that:

"A federal climate bill should include a national strategy, based on the best available science, to empower natural resources managers at the national, state, local and tribal levels to identify, prioritize and protect ecosystems at risk from climate change. The investment in natural resources must be dedicated (i.e., multi-year funding that is not subject to annual appropriations), so that resource and wildlife managers can plan ahead in their adaptation projects knowing funding is secure and to ensure funding goes exclusively to climate change-related projects."²

For more information on the USCAP *Blueprint for Legislative Action*, please go to www.us-cap.org.

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¹ United States Climate Action Partnership, *A Blueprint for Legislative Action: Consensus Recommendations for U.S. Climate Protection Legislation*, January 2009, Page 11.

² United States Climate Action Partnership, *A Blueprint for Legislative Action: Consensus Recommendations for U.S. Climate Protection Legislation*, January 2009, Page 15.